REMARKS ON ALFARABI'S *ATTAINMENT OF HAPPINESS*

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I

The *Attainment of Happiness* does not begin with an explanation of what happiness is or a description of the way to it. Instead, it enumerates four *human* things (theoretical virtues, deliberative virtues, moral virtues, and practical arts) whose presence in political communities (nations or cities) indicates that happiness is present in these political communities and that their citizens are already in possession of it (1.2–5).[1] The presence of these four human things seems to be the condition whose fulfillment will produce two kinds of happiness: the worldly happiness of this present life and the supreme or ultimate happiness of the life beyond. The opening sentence declares all this abruptly, without justifying it or promising to do so in the sequel; apart from the sequence in which these four human things are enumerated, and naming the first three "virtues" and the last "arts," it offers no clue as to their order of rank or how they are related. It is followed immediately by an exposition of the first class of virtues, the theoretical. The reader is thus led to expect four consecutive expositions, treating the four human things in the order in which they have just been enumerated. He will pursue the discussion with the hope of learning what these four human things are in order to judge whether the political communities he sees around him possess them.

The distinction between the happiness of this life and the happiness of the life to come may not be the exclusive property of religious communities or revealed religions. Yet the Arabic expressions employed by Alfarabi are standard Islamic—even Quranic—terms. It is possible that he means to give them a meaning or a content that is different from their generally accepted meaning or content. But he does not do so explicitly, here or in what follows. Indeed, he does not mention "worldly happiness" or "this present life" anywhere else in the trilogy.[2] One can explain this by suggesting that Alfarabi's main interest lies in the attainment of the highest happiness, the happiness of the world to come; as a true Muslim, he was entitled to consider worldly happiness unimportant, secondary, or instrumental. But this makes all the more urgent the question whether the possession of the four human things is a sufficient condition for the attainment of this happiness, and wheth-

er man can hope to attain it by his unaided effort. The "philosopher of the Muslims" (as Alfarabi was called) could not simply have overlooked what most Muslims believed to be the primary condition for attaining ultimate happiness—the presence in nations of certain divine favors: knowledge of divine things, divine providence, divine moral virtues, and divine arts—which condition is realized not by human, but by divine choice—divine revelation, the legislation of divine laws, and the example of a prophet.

Alfarabi, however, begins with a discussion of theoretical virtues and a recapitulation of the elements of Aristotle's theory of scientific knowledge: its ultimate purpose; its division into the preexistent and acquired; the division of the acquired into what is acquired through investigation, inference, instruction, and study; the distinction between problems and conclusions; and the description of the latter as conviction that may constitute either opinion or science. Concern with nations and cities and with men as citizens is set aside; knowledge of the things that are is spoken of as preexisting in, and pursued or acquired by man as an individual.

The distinction between opinion and science raises the question of the different ways or methods leading to knowledge; and although Alfarabi's immediate purpose is to describe knowledge that is certain, the description of the method that leads to certainty requires that it be differentiated from methods that do not lead to certainty and, consequently, a description of the kinds and arrangements of premises characteristic of each one of these methods. Like the knowledge of which Alfarabi has spoken, these methods are not the special property of any nation or city. They are the methods through which man as man arrives at different sorts of convictions.

Yet Alfarabi does not proceed to describe the method that leads to certainty, but diverges to what appears to be a plea for the need to understand the *differences* among these methods, for the necessity of knowing with certainty the characteristic features of each, and for the view that such knowledge is a prerequisite for the investigation of the things that are and for distinguishing conclusions that are certain from those that are not (3.3–4.15). Throughout this passage—that is, until he resumes the description of the method that leads to certainty (4. 16 ff.)—Alfarabi speaks exclusively of *us*[3] rather than of man in general. The topic as such does not indicate that Alfarabi means by *us* anything more than "human beings": for lack clarity about the specific differences among the methods is a general human predicament. It is only when Alfarabi refers to the investigators and speculative thinkers "whom we observe" (3.16) that the reader is compelled to consider the possibility that he may be in the presence of something more than stylistic variation.

II

The interlude in question is divided into two sections, each of which can be subdivided into two parts. The first section begins with the assertion (in the passive voice) that what is sought in every question is "the certain truth"; yet Alfarabi proceeds immediately to assert also that *we* do not attain certainty in most cases. What actually happens in such cases is *(1)* we attain certainty about part of the question and "belief" in the rest; or *(2)* we "imagine" something about it; or *(3)* we stray from it, and still "believe" that we have grasped it; or *(4)* we are perplexed about it. In the second part of this section Alfarabi offers to explain the cause of this state of affairs. We must be following a variety of methods; and since we seem to consider these conclusions satisfactory and in one case *(3)*, at least, we are satisfied with a belief that is not true, we must be unaware that these methods are different or where the differences among them lie; indeed we must believe that there is only one method and that it is the one we happen to follow. Alfarabi repeats this through an example in which he indicates that we may have to follow different methods in different questions: in one problem, e.g., a method that leads to certainty, and in another a method that leads to an image of the truth or a method that leads to belief about it. Here again, being unaware of the differences among these three methods, we hold that there is only a single method. Now, since according to Alfarabi what is sought is certain truth, the fact that we believe that there is only one method implies that we believe this single method to be the method that leads to the certain truth; and the fact that we are unaware of the varieties of methods implies that we are unaware of the varieties of conviction or of the different states of the soul that correspond to them. We are unaware of the difference between truth, belief, and image; and we are unaware of the difference between certainty, persuasion, imagination, straying away or being lost, and perplexity. Alfarabi's example does not deal with the last two states of the soul. He is more particularly interested in the fact that we are unaware of the difference between imagination–representation and persuasion-belief on the one hand, and certainty-truth on the other. He concludes this section by emphasizing again that this is how we find the matter to stand *with us* in most cases and specifying that this is how the matter stands with the overwhelming majority of those who investigate speculative matters whom *we* observe around us. Who are *we*? Although all the terms which Alfarabi employs and the methods he mentions in this section have their technical meanings in the art of logic, the need for a technical knowledge of these matters, or even of the fact that they are the object of a special art, is not presupposed in this section; on the contrary, we only become aware of the need for such technical knowledge when we consider the consequences of its absence. We may therefore call Alfarabi's use of these terms pretechnical.

All the terms used by him, whether referring to the methods or their conclusions, are also Quranic terms. The most notable among them are "the certain truth" *(al-ḥaqq al-yaqīn)* and "going astray" or "being lost" *(ḍalāl)*, which describe the Islamic revelation and ignorance of it respectively. Yet Alfarabi does not draw the distinction between those of *us* who are Muslims and those of *us* who are not, but rather between those of *us* who are Muslims and those of *us* Muslims who have observed the condition prevalent among us. Also, the awareness of the cause of the prevalent confusion (the variety of methods) does not result from possessing a non-Islamic or foreign science, but rather from observing the existence of various kinds of convictions among us. Alfarabi speaks here as a Muslim; he merely identifies himself with those Muslims who, observing the prevalence of confusion among their coreligionists, are concerned with its cause and remedy.[4]

The second section begins with a request to the party to whom the work is addressed. It is not the nations and the cities, or man in general, or *you* in the plural. The addressee is referred to in the second person singular, asked in the imperative form to consider the condition prevalent among *us* and its cause and to reach the evident conclusion that—unlike the rest of *us* who are investigating questions and arriving at hybrid convictions—*we* cannot escape the need to abandon their ways and to realize three things which they do not realize: *(1)* that all these methods are technical, that is, not natural to us or revealed and established by authority; *(2)* that we need a science by means of which to discern the specific differences among these methods; and *(3)* that our natural aptitude for science is not sufficient for discerning these differences. Therefore, in addition to natural aptitude, we need a special art to develop this aptitude and give us an account of the differences in question. Through this art "we become certain" about those premises and their arrangements which lead to certainty-truth, being lost-perplexity, belief-persuasion, and imagination-representation. In the second part of this section, Alfarabi repeats that only after acquiring this knowledge should we take further steps. In the repetition, he substitutes the "science of beings" for the "investigation of problems" mentioned at the beginning of the section. Also, both there and in the entire preceding section he was entirely silent about instruction and study, about "what *we* had learned from others" and "what *we* ourselves teach others." But now we are ready to look for the "science of beings" in all these ways. For now we know what manner of thing each of them is; we possess the power to distinguish the various sorts of conclusions we reach and the various sorts of convictions we achieve. Finally, we can now *test* what we have learned from others and what we ourselves teach others.

Only on rare occasions does Alfarabi identify his addressee or direct our attention to him. But once he is introduced, we have to learn all we can about

him and keep him in view. For it is to him that Alfarabi speaks directly and not to us: we are only the audience of the dialogue. When Alfarabi speaks of *us,* he is speaking of himself and of his addressee; he means *I* and *thou* or a larger group to which *I* and *thou* belong, but which is still delimited: *we; we* Muslims; *we* who have observed the condition prevalent among *us* Muslims regarding the methods; *we* who cannot escape realizing that these methods are technical or the product of art, who need a science by means of which to designate their specific differences, and who possess natural aptitude for science and need to develop it through an art which makes it possible to ascertain the character of the premises and the arrangement proper to each method; *we* who set out to seek the science of the things that are only *after* acquiring this prerequisite knowledge; *we* who claim to know how to investigate and teach and learn only *after* proficiency in logic; *we* who have the power to test the truth of what we discover, of what others teach us, and of what we teach others, and who can distinguish between truth, beliefs, and representations. There is, of course, a difference between the *I* and the *thou* of these *we's.* On the very rare occasions when Alfarabi speaks of himself in the first person singular, he says *I mean*: that is, he proceeds to explain a statement whose meaning is clear to himself but not to the addressee. And whenever he speaks directly to his addressee, he commands him to do something or indicates the way in which the addressee can reach a certain conclusion. The addressee does not yet belong to the more restricted *we* to which Alfarabi belongs; he is being led by the arm. At this stage, for instance, he is required to train himself in the art of logic so as to qualify for stepping up from membership in *us,* the Muslims who are observing the methodological confusion we are in, to membership in *us,* the logicians who have overcome that confusion and who possess the proper equipment to acquire knowledge of the things that are.

If the reader now follows the discussion of logic and the sciences of the things that are (mathematics, physics, divine science, and human or political science) with this last distinction in mind, he will notice that in every instance where Alfarabi interrupts the progress of the anonymous "investigator" (8.16 ff.) to speak of *us,* the topic is the same: the distinction between things as they are known to us and things as they are known by nature. Alfarabi develops the logical implications of this distinction (the classical statement about it occurs in the opening chapter of Aristotle's *Physics*) immediately after concluding the passage just analyzed. From this discussion it becomes clear that *certain truth* and the *way* to it are equivocal terms, and that to begin with primary cognitions is the necessary but not sufficient condition for achieving the ultimate aim of theoretical science. This is brought out by the distinction between the "principles of instruction" and the "principles of being," a distinction that goes beyond the formal differentiation of the

various logical methods.[5] Thus *our* scientific method is distinguished by our recognition that the principles of instruction we employ may be different from the principles of being. (In the case of one being, the ultimate principle or God, we possess only the principles of *our* knowledge of it.) We persist in progressing through the effects known to us toward the causes or the principles that we do not know; only when we come to know these principles on the basis of what is clear to us do we proceed to explain the effects of these principles which are hidden from us. In mathematics, these problems do not arise. The principles of instruction are identical with the principles of being, and mathematical proofs (as Alfarabi emphasizes through the interjection *I mean* [9.19]) are purely formal. It is in this sense that the inquiry into numbers and magnitudes is "easier" and least susceptible to "perplexity and confusion," and hence less likely to give rise to differences of opinion regarding the character of its method and the certainty of its proof. Alfarabi does not speak of *us* anywhere in connection with the mathematical sciences. In natural science, in contrast, the principles of instruction are for the most part different from and subordinate to the principles of being; here Alfarabi refers again to those of *us* who ascend from the principles of instruction to the principles of being, and then descend to explain the things that originate from the principles of being which originally were unknown to us.

It is curious, however, that when Alfarabi proceeds to describe the progress of the investigator through the part of natural science that deals with man, his perfection, and sociability, through divine science, and through human or political science, he does not refer to *us* again; the "investigator" is now mentioned more frequently; and, instead of being given "demonstrations," we are told that the conclusions of these matters "become evident *to him*." For the time being, we restrict ourselves to the following observations. Alfarabi's last reference to *us* occurs at the end of the science of nature in the strict sense—that is, the investigation of bodies and things corporeal. The investigation of the principles of being of the heavenly bodies and of the human intellect leads to the recognition that these principles "are not natures or natural things..., nor bodies nor in bodies" (12.16–17). The investigation of metaphysical or divine beings begins with principles of instruction, then the investigator recognizes that none of these beings possesses a material cause, and his investigation of their other three causes leads him finally to a Being that has no cause or principle of being at all. Hence the ultimate aim of divine science, which is the knowledge of this Being, is confined to the knowledge *that* this Being exists, and does not include any knowledge of the principles of its being. As for the investigation of man, it too leads to the recognition that "natural principles" are insufficient. As it considers soul and intellect, it recognizes that their principles consist of certain "ends" and of the "last perfection" of man which, again, do not act as natural causes,

but are objectives for which man has to work by making use of certain rational principles that are in him. Having learned about this perfection, the investigator now knows the end of human deliberation, moral acts, and practical arts, and this knowledge enables him to distinguish those of them that serve man's perfection from the ones that do not, or that obstruct man's perfection. Unlike the investigation of bodies or corporeal things, the theoretical investigation of man does not lead to knowledge of the causes or the grounds of an existing thing, but only of the "perfection which [man] should achieve." Whereas in things that are strictly natural the investigation starting from the principles of instruction can lead to certainty regarding their existence and all the grounds of their existence, in divine science the principles of instruction make it evident "to the investigator" merely *that* an ultimate principle exists and *that* it must be perfect without qualification, and in human or political science the principles of instruction lead him to see *what* and *how* is man's perfection or end—that is, the *that* of such a perfection remains a problem.

At the end of his description of theoretical science, Alfarabi turns once again to the addressee and speaks to him as follows: "This, then, is theoretical perfection. *As you see*, it comprises knowledge of the four kinds of things through which the citizens of cities and nations attain the utmost happiness" (16.15–27). "To see" *(raʾā)* is the verb from which the technical term "opinion" *(raʾy)* is derived and in turn gives its signification back to the verb, which thus means also "to opine" or "to form an opinion." Alfarabi does not expect his interlocutor, who not long ago had to be asked to reflect on the confusion of methods among *us*, to have had an opportunity to attain "the certain truth" or "knowledge" about theoretical perfection. But he does expect him to be able now to form a likely view or opinion about what is comprised by theoretical perfection or about the kind of knowledge it is. His ability to form such an opinion presupposes the ability to see the necessity of discerning the character of the various methods, learning the method that leads to the certain truth, and joining those of *us* who are logicians. But it presupposes also that he had an opportunity to observe how *we logicians* proceed in attaining knowledge of the things that are in the way they really are, and especially how *our* method ascertains the *that* and *why* of natural beings. This means that our associate has had an opportunity to observe how *we physicists* apply the method that leads to certainty first and foremost in the study of nature and natural beings, including man; how we refuse to discourse about things that do not form part of the natural world in which we live until the investigation of the principles of the things we know *forces* us to inquire into things that are "not nature or natural"; and how we proceed then to investigate divine things on the basis provided by the knowledge of nature and natural beings, admit only what becomes evident through this investigation, and refuse to accept as certain that which we have not been able to ascertain. Alfarabi is

not instructing the addressee in the theoretical sciences; he leads him through them to show how they operate and helps him form a conviction that theoretical perfection consists of what can be known in and through these theoretical sciences alone. Since we have no way of measuring the addressee's reaction apart from Alfarabi's speech, we can only express our amazement at the implications of the question that follows; for, the mere fact that it is asked indicates the measure to which Alfarabi's enterprise has been successful: "Are you, then, of the opinion [do you suppose, is it possible] that these theoretical sciences have also supplied what can make these four [bases of happiness] actually exist in nations and cities?" (16.19–17.1.) The addressee does not seem to object to the definition of theoretical perfection or the claim that it is knowledge of all the things required for the attainment of happiness. On the contrary, he is ready to be asked the question—and the two interlocutors are ready to consider the problem—whether theoretical perfection by itself comprises everything needed for the attainment of happiness; whether it supplies, in addition to knowledge, whatever is needed to bring everything that leads to the attainment of happiness into actual existence among citizens and in political communities.

Before undertaking to describe the method of certainty and the different theoretical sciences, Alfarabi chose to draw the addressee's attention to *us* Muslims and the confusion of methods prevalent among *us*. Now, with more important issues at stake—what constitutes perfection and ultimate happiness, and how they are realized—he is oblivious to what *we* Muslims believe them to be or how *we* believe they should be realized. It is possible to explain Alfarabi's silence in part as follows. Because *we* do not differentiate the methods from each other, *we* cannot distinguish certainty from persuasion or imagination and cannot judge which is knowledge of the truth and which is an opinion about it or an image of it. Therefore, only *we* Muslims who are also logicians and physicists know what science is and can determine what "theoretical perfection" consists of. Since the theoretical knowledge that concerns man includes knowledge of his perfection and happiness, *we* alone are competent to judge what these, too, consist of. Yet even *we* do not know, at least not prior to examination, whether theoretical perfection is sufficient for the attainment of happiness or whether something else is needed. Before exploring Alfarabi's understanding of religion, it would be premature to question the implicit claim made here for *us* logicians and physicists. Those of *us* who are Muslims without being logicians or physicists would certainly dispute that claim and suggest that the best knowledge of man's happiness, especially his "ultimate" happiness, is that which is presented in the divine law, and that it is the divine law also which shows the way to achieve this happiness. We shall see that Alfarabi does not dispute this suggestion but acknowledges everything it claims. However, since even *we* logicians and physicists are

willing to consider the question whether theoretical perfection is sufficient for the attainment of happiness, a superficial examination does not make clear why Alfarabi does not indicate how this question appears to *us* Muslims. Furthermore, by asserting that knowledge of man's perfection and happiness can be acquired through unaided reason, Alfarabi the logician and physicist does not cease to belong to *us* Muslims; otherwise, the Quranic injunction that *we* ought to investigate the heavens and all existing things would have been in vain. The question is thus relevant to *us* Muslims; yet, to be relevant to *us* it has to be formulated as follows: does this theoretical perfection supply everything needed for the attainment of ultimate happiness?

Should the answer to this question be in the affirmative, it will inevitably lead one to wonder about the use of religion and the divine law, apart, that is, from urging us to acquire this theoretical perfection. If, on the other hand, theoretical perfection supplies only knowledge of ultimate happiness and what leads to it, there will be still need for something else that brings what is known theoretically into actual existence, and this can be the function of religion and the divine law. This latter position, which implies that the function of religion and the divine law is to bring into actual existence what man's unaided reason comes to know in theoretical science, is said by some to have been taken by Muslim philosophers, including Alfarabi. It is therefore all the more surprising that in this context Alfarabi refuses to take a stand on the issue of religion and that his interlocutor, too, finds no difficulty in accepting Alfarabi's answer, which is this. Theoretical perfection is not sufficient for actualizing happiness in cities and nations; what is needed additionally, however, is not religion and the divine law but something like prudence. The interlocutor seems to show an unexpected readiness in accepting this answer. Yet it is possible that we had underestimated him from the outset. Alfarabi hints at this possibility by reminding his interlocutor of the opening sentence, which asserted that every kind of happiness can be attained by citizens of cities and by nations, provided they come to possess the four human things enumerated there, and that he, the interlocutor, had already accepted that assertion. The question now is whether knowledge of what these four things are is the same as their possession by, or realization among the citizens and political communities. To answer this question negatively is to affirm Alfarabi's original statement—that is, that the attainment of happiness presupposes the possession of all the four accomplishments, not theoretical virtue alone; and the present discussion proceeds to show why, besides theoretical virtue, we need the deliberative virtue or the virtue of prudence. The problem which is of immediate interest to the interlocutor is not whether we need divine assistance in addition to the four human accomplishments, but whether we need any other human virtue and art besides theoretical virtue and its perfection; and the fact that Alfarabi devotes almost

half of the *Attainment of Happiness* to convince him that such a need exists is indicative of the importance of this problem as well as of the interlocutor's defective knowledge of practical matters.

III

In contrast to sections 1 and 4,[6] in each of which Alfarabi speaks twice directly to his addressee, sections 2 and 3 (which attempt to find a solution to the problem just mentioned) contain no direct reference to the addressee. Moreover, we find only two cursory references to *us* in section 2 and none in section 3. The reason Alfarabi could refer to *us* on numerous occasions in section 1 (at the end of which he was also able to say with confidence that the addressee could form his own opinion about the presentation that had preceded and that this opinion agreed with his own) no longer seems valid. This change corresponds to a change in the main theme. The theme of section 1 was theoretical virtue; its hero was the "investigator" whose aim is to make intelligible with certainty the things that are; logic and the investigation of nature held the central position. The theme of sections 2 and 3 is the realization of the four human things in cities and nations. Section 2 attempts to show that this requires, not only theoretical perfection, but also the highest deliberative virtue, the highest moral virtue, and the highest practical art; and that all four should be acquired by a human being equipped for them by nature. Its hero is not the "investigator" of the theoretical sciences as such, but someone who possesses the will and decides to bring the four human things required for the attainment of happiness into actual existence in cities and nations. Therefore, he needs another faculty besides the theoretical and should acquire the political virtue and all the other qualifications of the "prince."

Alfarabi's arguments are still directed to the addressee, to the logician and physicist. Nevertheless, at the beginning of section 2, Alfarabi indicates that the matters under discussion do not fall within the domain of physics; they emerge only when one sees the distinctions between them and natural beings. Particular natural beings are actualized and given their attributes by nature, while it is by the activity of the will that virtues and arts are realized. Alfarabi uses natural beings to explain and make evident to his addressee some of the problems involved in realizing things that depend on the will, and to explain that the latter fall in a class by themselves. Alfarabi's difficulty in guiding his addressee in the direction which he intends can perhaps be seen best from the particular manner in which he formulates the two phrases in which he refers to *us* in this section. Temperance and wealth, like man, are intelligible notions, but unlike the notion man they are not natural but voluntary. Therefore, "*if we decide* to bring them into actual existence,"

we have to know how their attributes vary in time, place, and so forth (19.5 ff.). Again, the most authoritative or the highest art is that which precedes all other arts; "*if we decide* to perform its functions," we will have to make use of the functions of all the other arts. In the case of natural beings, it is sufficient to know the intelligible notions, for nature itself brings the particular natural beings into existence and supplies them with the required attributes. But in the case of voluntary notions, the knower himself performs this function, and knowledge alone does not enable him to perform it well. Further, there is no necessary connection between knowledge of the intelligible notions temperance and wealth, and the activity of bringing these notions into actual existence. The activity depends on a further condition, the desire and the decision to perform it. The conjunction "if" *(idhā)*, which Alfarabi employs in both instances, implies a condition which is not necessarily present in the possessor of theoretical science. Beyond this Alfarabi ceased to speak of *us* in divine science and human or political science in section 1, and thus we begin to suspect that the absence of the desire and decision which he specifies here affects the theoretical study of divine and human things, as distinguished from logic and physics where the common ground hinted at by the frequent reference to *us* was most apparent. Absence of the will in the addressee to actualize voluntary intelligible notions in cities and nations somehow affects his theoretical understanding of them, or it produces a lack of enthusiasm for divine and human things as distinguished from logic and physics.

Be this as it may, the addressee is excluded from section 3. The theme of this section is no longer the argument that the possessor of theoretical virtue must also possess the highest deliberative and moral virtues and the highest practical art—that is, that he must become a true prince. Rather it describes what a prince who has achieved these virtues must learn and do. Since he ought to be able to actualize the specialized virtues and arts in cities and nations, Alfarabi proceeds to explain how he ought to teach and form the character of his subjects, persuade and conquer, legislate, order the classes of his subordinates, and lead cities and nations and every group and every individual to the ultimate happiness for which they are equipped by nature. The implication of this material with reference to the addressee seems to be clear. It is up to him to decide whether he wishes to become a prince. If he decides to become one, and succeeds, this will be his reward. If not, he will be excluded from this great power and glory, and Alfarabi excludes him from it now in a symbolic way by not addressing him and not including him among the "supreme rulers" who, among other things, will have the power to control the teaching and investigation of the theoretical sciences.

IV

With the termination of section 3 the treatment of the subject matter of the *Attainment of Happiness*, strictly speaking, is completed. The four human things whose possession leads to happiness have been dealt with, both in themselves and in respect to the ways whereby they are realized in nations and cities. A cursory glance at the opening and concluding remarks of each one of the first three sections suffices to show that Alfarabi supplies a rigid framework to remind the reader of the steps of his argument and that within this framework the concluding remarks of section 3 announce that the subject matter upon which the author had embarked is now definitely terminated. Section 4 seems to be a kind of epilogue which is extraneous to the theme formulated in the opening sentence of the *Attainment of Happiness*. Were the latter indeed the true theme of the work, it would be difficult to justify the presence of this last section. Moreover, section 4 introduces a number of new topics, all of which are treated with relative haste. It begins with a praise of theoretical science and traces its origins. It explains the meaning of "philosophy" and "religion" and the relation between them "according to the Greeks." It explains the ideas as well as the *names* of "prince," "philosopher," "legislator," and "*imām*" (religious ruler). It explains how the same human being can be a philosopher and a religious lawgiver. It distinguishes between the false and true philosopher, and asserts the latter's claim to rule. Finally, it traces *this* kind of philosophy to the Greeks in general and to Plato and Aristotle in particular, and this serves as a transition to the remaining two parts of the trilogy. The swiftness with which these topics are treated is compensated for, however, by relatively frequent direct references to authorities, a practice which Alfarabi had avoided up to this point with a single exception: the reference to Plato with respect to the education of the prince in section 3 (30.7).

Once we consider these references, we begin to discern the general theme of this section and the relationship between it and the theme of section 1. We remember that section 1 concluded with the assertion that *theoretical* science encompasses knowledge of the four human things whereby cities and nations attain ultimate happiness and that Alfarabi took it for granted that the addressee understood what this assertion meant. But consideration of the problem whether theoretical science is sufficient for realizing these four things led to the conclusion that, not one, but *four* kinds of science are required: *(1)* theoretical sciences that make intelligible the things that are by certain demonstrations; *(2)* rhetorical sciences that present these same intelligibles by way of persuasion; *(3)* poetic sciences that supply representations of these intelligibles by way of persuasion; and *(4)* sciences extracted from the first three for each nation (35.2–8). Alfarabi does not tire of repeat-

ing in this section that the first kind is the highest. But his intention is to convince the addressee that he should accept the other three sciences as necessary and useful, and that these sciences should be employed to fulfill the purpose of theoretical science which is man's ultimate happiness (38.9–13; cf. 34.1). The addressee does not need to be convinced of the superiority of theoretical science. Alfarabi tried to prove in section 2 that, by themselves, the theoretical sciences are not sufficient for the realization of ultimate happiness, and he proceeded in section 3 (apparently without noticing whether the addressee was able or willing to follow this discussion) to elaborate the activities of the "prince" who teaches the citizens and forms their character by their consent and by compulsion. Originally, the addressee was asked to admit that other things are needed in addition to theoretical science. Now he is being asked to admit that three other kinds of science are needed besides the theoretical.

Alfarabi does not call these three kinds "rhetorical," "poetic," and "national"; but these names are appropriate if we consider their definitions. If we place ourselves in the position of the addressee, the first question that comes to mind is whether Alfarabi is justified in calling the nontheoretical disciplines "sciences" or whether the usage is arbitrary. Through frequent repetition of the name "science," by itself and in conjunction with the demonstratives "*this* science," "*these* sciences," and "*those* sciences," Alfarabi forces the addressee to wonder about this question, distracts him from other objections he might have had, and almost reduces the whole issue to one of *names*. Then he proceeds to show his own competence as an authority on names and their meaning, that his manner of using names is based on solid authority and understanding, and that the addressee should learn this from him.

The problematic character of names emerges in this section as follows. Alfarabi justifies the existence of the other sciences on the ground that they are necessary for the instruction of the vulgar. He sets forth the distinction between the vulgar and the elect on the basis of the distinction between common opinion and knowledge. But the names, "vulgar" and "elect", are not applied in general usage to those who accept common opinions and those who seek to know, respectively; they are not employed strictly on the basis of knowledge but on the basis of belief: people who are skilled in a certain art say that they themselves belong to the elect and that others are vulgar, because they believe that they themselves possess knowledge and that others follow generally accepted opinions (37.3–14). Alfarabi does not introduce this common and imprecise usage to cast doubt on the true distinction between the vulgar and the elect, but to support it. The common usage, based on what people think or believe, reflects the true meanings of these names. The distinction between the vulgar and the elect is known best, not by the practitioners of the arts who are confined to their own belief about

what they know, but by the practitioners of the sciences, especially those of them who possess the highest science which is not based on generally accepted opinion.

Alfarabi turns from the practitioners of the arts to the practitioners of this science, attempts to determine which was the first or earliest group to possess it, and tries to find out what the name "science" meant according to "them." But here he meets with the following problem. Tradition relates ("it is said") that the first to possess this science were the Chaldeans, and that it passed from them to the Egyptians, the Greeks, the Syrians, and finally the Arabs. Alfarabi did not have the literature of the Chaldeans or the Egyptians on the subject, or he did not trust what went under that name in his time. (He did not know, for instance, whether what was reported to be the wisdom of the Chaldeans and of the Egyptians meant "this [theoretical] science" or "the other sciences.") The only literatures he knew embodying the expression of this science were in the Greek, the Syriac, and the Arabic tongues. In order to find out the earliest uses of the name, science, he had to go back to the Greeks ("among whom it remained for some time"). They are Alfarabi's best authority, both because they possessed this science and because we have the "names" they applied to it and know what they "meant" by these names. In section 3 Alfarabi broadened the meaning of science to include the other three kinds of sciences besides the theoretical, and broadened the function of "science" to include a political, besides the cognitive role. Now he defends all this as the original meaning and function of science "among the Greeks who possessed *this* science." The first name they had for it was "absolute wisdom" and the "highest *wisdom*"; they gave the name "science" to the acquisition of that wisdom. They had a specifically Greek name, "philosophy," for the scientific state of mind; but what they *meant* by philosophy was the *love* of that highest wisdom. The one who acquires this wisdom is not named "scientist" by them but "philosopher," by which name they meant the *lover* of the highest wisdom. Alfarabi's account of these names thus shifts away from "science" to "wisdom" and love of wisdom—to philosophy and the philosopher. Finally, he reports the view or opinion of the Greek philosophers about the object of their love, the highest wisdom (that potentially it encompasses *all* the virtues), reports the names they gave to it ("the science of sciences" and so forth), and explains what they meant by such names.

The conclusion is this. Alfarabi is not an innovator. The innovators are those who restrict the meaning of science to theoretical science only. Whatever the advantages of this restriction, it departs from the original meaning of wisdom and philosophy. Seen in that original and wider perspective, the investigations of theoretical science alone do not constitute the search for the highest wisdom, and the philosophy which obtains theoretical

science without the power to instruct and form the character of the multitude is incomplete philosophy. Alfarabi's notion of science, wisdom, and philosophy, is the original notion, which is also the perfect and most complete notion. In comparison, the concept of science as merely theoretical is an innovation and a partial or incomplete concept. Seen in this partial perspective the philosopher need not be the supreme ruler; but were one to recover the original, unrestricted concept of the philosopher (the notion of the absolute philosopher), then "philosopher" and "supreme ruler" would mean the same thing. Moreover, by returning to the original use of names, we recover, concomitantly with the older, more authoritative, and unrestricted meaning of philosophy, the meaning of "religion" according to the ancients and the relationship between philosophy and religion, which finds its highest expression in the activity of the philosopher-lawgiver. Finally, the recovery of the original Greek names "wisdom," "science," and "philosophy," teaches us, not only the original meanings of these names and the relationship among them, but also how different names can indicate different aspects of the same thing. It enables us to see how these names indicate separate things when we think only of the restricted signification of the names, and that to find out their true meaning is to recover their unconditional or unrestricted signification. For instance, "lawgiver" signifies the discovery of the particular conditions under which happiness can be sought by a particular political community. But this presupposes that the lawgiver knows what happiness is, or that he has acquired philosophy. The name "philosophy" has acquired the restricted significance of theoretical virtue. But the existence of the theoretical virtue in its last perfection requires the presence of the other, nontheoretical virtues as well. The name "prince" signifies complete power. But to possess complete power without restriction means to possess also the inner power of thought, virtue, and art. The name "*imām*" (cf. 29.18, *passim*) in Arabic means being followed and accepted as a guide. But in order to be followed and accepted without condition or restriction, a guide should have the highest purpose, science, virtue, and art. Alfarabi does not return to the original meaning of science merely to justify his own manner of using this name or to recover the original meaning of wisdom and philosophy, but to recover the way Greek philosophers (the ancients) thought about names (such as *imām*) which were not known to the Greeks but whose meaning has to be sought out "according to the Arabic language."

This, then, seems to be the immediate object of section 4: to train the addressee in the method of transcending the restricted signification of names. In the third of the four instances in which Alfarabi speaks directly to the addressee, and in the second of the three instances in which he employs the formula "make it evident to yourself" he commands him to learn that the logical, abstract, or unrestricted meaning (*maʿnā*) of the expressions (*alfāẓ*),

"philosopher," "supreme ruler," "prince," "lawgiver," and "*imām*," is one and the same (43.18–19). He also alludes to the way he, the addressee, can learn the unity underlying this diversity of expressions. "Whichever one of these expressions you take, proceeding then to consider what each one of them signifies according to the majority of those who speak *our language* you will find that in the end they all agree by signifying one and the same meaning" (43.19–44.2). Thus the addressee cannot learn what Alfarabi asks him to learn merely by taking the expressions themselves, but only by going further and finding out what they signify among those who speak *our* language. Had we not become aware of the problem of language and the central place it occupies in the present section, and also of the fact that (apart from the colophon) this is the sole instance in it in which Alfarabi refers to *us*, we might have been satisfied with the apparent linguistic meaning of *our* language—Arabic, the language spoken by Alfarabi and his addressee. But immediately prior to this command Alfarabi explained the *meaning* of *imām* "in the language of the Arabs" and said that "it signifies merely the one whose example is followed and who is well received." Then he proceeded to explain how one must understand this definition: when the implied restriction of the signification of the name is lifted, then *imām* will come to mean the same as "philosopher." The latter signification is surely not "according to the language of the Arabs." Further, the name "philosopher" is Greek and not Arabic, and Alfarabi, who had labored so much to point out the importance of recovering the original Greek meaning of names such as "science" and "wisdom," could not be asking the addressee to accept, as his final authority on what the name "philosopher" signifies, its signification among the majority of those who do not speak Greek and who could not, for instance, surmise by looking at the word *faylasūf* that it means "the one who loves and is in quest of the highest wisdom," which, according to Alfarabi's report, is the authoritative meaning given to the Greek name by those among the Greeks who possessed the highest science. By the same token, *our* language could not mean Greek, for *imām* is not a Greek name. And although Alfarabi mentions the fact that the highest science was expressed "in the Greek tongue," he never explains the meaning of any name according to the Greek tongue, but only according to "those among the Greeks who possessed this science." These two are not necessarily identical. For instance, in the Greek tongue, "philosopher" means the one who loves or is in quest of wisdom; while those among the Greeks who possessed this science "meant by philosopher the one who loves and is in quest of the *highest* wisdom." In his explanation of the meaning of *imām*, which goes beyond the meaning of the name "in the language of the Arabs," Alfarabi does not follow the signification of the name according to the Greek tongue but follows the practice of "those among the Greeks who possessed this science" and who gave Greek names

meanings that go beyond the common meaning of the expressions in question. *Our* language is, therefore, neither Greek nor Arabic; it is the language of "those who possess this science," whether Greeks or Arabs. It is also not the language common to Alfarabi and his addressee. The addressee, we found out, is a neophyte in *this* language: he is commanded to learn it. The estrangement between Alfarabi and his addressee, which reached its climax in section 3, is not resolved here through a common denominator (the Arabic language). Alfarabi only holds forth the promise that the addressee can join a new community to which he does not yet belong, provided he learns its language. Only by learning this new language can he know what "philosophy," "legislation," and "religion" truly mean, and that mere knowledge of theoretical science is the sign of the counterfeit, vain, and false philosopher.

Although Alfarabi does not specify further who the Greeks or the ancients who spoke his language were, there is a figure who plays a significant role in this section and, as it were, embodies the authority on which Alfarabi bases his reinterpretation of the meaning of "science." Plato enjoys the distinction of being the only philosopher whose name is mentioned in the text of the *Attainment of Happiness*. He is mentioned for the first time in section 3 where, in connection with the education of *imāms* and princes and their political role, Alfarabi refers the reader to Plato's account (in the *Republic*) of the steps which they should follow in learning the sciences and acquiring the habits of character from their childhood until they become the supreme rulers of the city (30.7). Although it is evident that he is the primary authority for that entire section, it is only in section 4, after Alfarabi's reference to the ancients and their view of the relation between philosophy and religion, that Plato emerges as the key figure in the *Attainment of Happiness*. Alfarabi refers to what Plato does in the *Timaeus* as the model for the production of sensible images of intelligible things (41.5). This imagemaking activity is said to be characteristic of religion in contrast to philosophy, which presents a demonstrative account of the things themselves. (There is a mysterious figure [41.6] who is said to have represented matter by abyss or darkness or water, and nothingness by darkness. Alfarabi does not mention the name of this anonymous prophet, but the suggestion that he imitated Plato is strengthened by the hint that "philosophy precedes religion in time" [41.12].) Then, in the concluding discussion concerning the distinction between the true and the false philosopher, Alfarabi refers again to Plato's account in the *Republic* of the necessary equipment that the student of theoretical science should possess in order not to end being a counterfeit, vain, or false philosopher (45.17). In the same connection, he refers again to the "fire (sun) of Heraclitus" mentioned by Plato (in the *Republic*) to illustrate how the light of theoretical science learned by the false philosopher who lacks natural equipment, and by the vain philosopher who lacks proper habits, is quenched as they grow old (46.2).

If we now consider these four references to Plato, we see that they are concerned exclusively with the proper education of future philosophers and the relationship between philosophy and religion. They refer to two of Plato's works, the *Republic* and the *Timaeus*, which are also the only writings mentioned in the *Attainment of Happiness*. What Plato does in the *Timaeus* is presented as a model for the imitative activity which resulted in what the ancients called "religion." What he mentions in the *Republic* is presented as the normative account of the upbringing and education of the true philosopher.

According to Alfarabi, Plato specifies in the *Republic* that, in order to avoid becoming a false philosopher, the student of theoretical science "should have sound convictions about the opinions of the religion in which he is reared, hold fast to the virtuous acts in his religion, and not forsake all or most of them" (45.6–7). This statement is patently ambiguous. Nevertheless, on the basis of it no student of theoretical science can be considered a true philosopher if he turns his back on the opinions and actions of his religion or pursues theoretical science in utter disregard of the religious community in which he lives. If we remember that Alfarabi's references to Plato appeared after Alfarabi abandoned the common ground on the basis of which he could refer to himself and the addressee of the *Attainment of Happiness* as *we*, and that Plato is the only one among those who speak *our* language who is mentioned by name and whose works are cited by Alfarabi, we begin to perceive the apparent implication of this change of attitude toward the addressee. Plato is the authority to whom Alfarabi refers the addressee to support his reevaluation of the status of theoretical science. If the addressee is to become a true philosopher and not a mere student of theoretical science or a false philosopher, he should learn the language of Plato or what Plato does and says in the *Timaeus* and the *Republic*.

The argument of section 4, especially the emphasis on the education of the future philosopher-prince and the relation between philosophy and religion, prepares us for the dominant theme of the concluding remarks, which is the distinction between philosophy itself, the ways leading to philosophy, and the ways through which philosophy is to be reconstructed or reestablished when it has become defective or extinct (47.4–5). But it does not prepare us for the assertion that the philosophy described by Alfarabi in section 4 (the only section in which the name "philosophy" appears) "has come down to us through the Greeks from Plato *and* Aristotle" (47.3–4). Aristotle is not mentioned anywhere else in the *Attainment of Happiness*. He is undoubtedly the main authority for the logical methods and the natural science described in section 1; yet, even there, Alfarabi avoids mentioning him by name. Subsequently Alfarabi leads the addressee to a view of science which seems to be characteristically Platonic and postpones the mention of

philosophy until after he mentions Plato and until he can equate philosophy with the new view of science emerging from the wider meaning of philosophy. The argument of the work as a whole deliberately culminates in the education of the future philosopher-princé according to the program offered in Plato's *Republic* on the one hand, and in indicating the philosophic importance of the question of religion which finds its solution in Plato's *Timaeus*, on the other. Yet after having led us to this conclusion, Alfarabi now affirms unequivocally that we can learn *this* philosophy from *Aristotle* as well: Still, Plato and Aristotle gave us two separate accounts of philosophy and of the ways to it and to reestablishing it. Alfarabi calls them "Plato's philosophy" and "Aristotle's philosophy," respectively, and announces his intention to present a separate account of each. (Alfarabi's trilogy, the *Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, was also known under the title the *Two Philosophies*.)

Without indicating the manner in which these two philosophies have become *the* philosophy described by him in the *Attainment of Happiness*, Alfarabi turns to his addressee with a final request. He asks him to learn "from this" (from the preceding account, from the following two separate accounts, or from both) that Plato and Aristotle had a single purpose and that they aimed at giving an account of a single philosophy. The addressee is asked next to go beyond what Alfarabi is offering him in this trilogy, to seek for the evidence regarding the unity of the purpose and aim of Plato and Aristotle. Alfarabi leads the addressee to the two philosophies and ends by pointing toward their purpose and aim, but he does not show them to him. This is something which the addressee has to find for himself. The only aid the addressee receives from Alfarabi in this respect is a number. The *Attainment of Happiness* begins with the number 4, leads the addressee by the arm to the number 2, and requests him to look by himself for the number 1.[7]

All this seems rather enigmatic. It certainly does not offer a direct answer to the difficulties encountered in Alfarabi's concluding remarks, when they are considered not as a transition to the two parts of the trilogy yet to come, but as a conclusion of the *Attainment of Happiness*. Yet if we are concerned with Alfarabi's purpose and aim, we must proceed to study parts 2 and 3, in which Alfarabi hides behind Plato and Aristotle, to see if they shed further light on part 1 where he is presenting his own account of the way to their philosophy. Although the concluding remarks raise more questions than they answer, they are helpful in one decisive respect. They vitiate the conclusion to which every step in the *Attainment of Happiness* seemed to be leading, and for which the surface movement of the argument seemed to offer massive support, that is, that Alfarabi is leading his addressee away from the philosophy of Aristotle and to the philosophy of Plato. We now know that the work is designed to lead the addressee to the philosophy of Aristotle as well as of Plato; that he needs an account of the philosophy of Aristotle just

as much as of that of Plato; and that the work aims at training the addressee to understand, not only Alfarabi's account of Plato's philosophy, but his account of Aristotle's philosophy also. Why, then, did Alfarabi preserve complete silence about Aristotle until the last moment? The Aristotle who was not mentioned earlier in the *Attainment of Happiness* is an Aristotle who leads up to Plato. But there is another Aristotle who will be engendered by Plato and who "sees the perfection of man as Plato sees it and more."

NOTES

[1] All references in the text are to the pages and lines of the Hyderabad edition (1345 A.H.); cf. "Notes to the Arabic text of the *Attainment of Happiness*," in *Alfarabi's Philosophy of Plato and Aristotle*, translated with an introduction by Muhsin Mahdi (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1969). The translation includes the *Attainment of Happiness*, the *Philosophy of Plato*, and the *Philosophy of Aristotle*, whi make up a trilogy.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Alfarabi usually takes advantage of the construction of the Arabic verbal sentence to leave the subject or the actor implied or hidden in the verb. (This gives rise to serious problems when an editor or translator is forced to specify the implied noun or pronoun in question. The manuscripts differ in the extent to which they supply the necessary diacritical points and are not reliable in the vowel signs they provide. To supply these means to decide upon the gender, number, person, and tense of the verb; not infrequently, all this may have to be decided on the basis of what might be called circumstantial evidence.) But in the passages to which we refer, Alfarabi makes certain that no ambiguity remains regarding the fact that he is now speaking in the first person plural or in the second person singular. These passages are not evenly distributed. The longest occurs near the beginning (3.4–4. 15). They become less frequent and shorter as one advances toward the center (25.11–12). Thereafter, they disappear completely, except for a single sentence that occurs toward the end (43.19–44.2). The last passage is the author's colophon (47.3–10).

[4] In this respect, the *Attainment of Happiness* is an exoteric work.

[5] In his short commentary on the *Posterior Analytics* (MS, Hamīdiyyah, 812, fol. 67r) Alfarabi explains this distinction by the following example. We observe a gradual increase in the light of the moon as it turns from crescent to full moon. From this we infer that the moon is spherical. The increase in the light of the moon is the cause of our knowledge that the moon is spherical. Yet it is the spherical shape of the moon that is the cause of gradual increase in its light. This is what Alfarabi means by saying that the principles of instruction are the causes of our knowledge of the principles of being, and yet the principles of being are the causes of the existence of whatever we happen to employ as principles of instruction.

[6] The division of the text into four sections is the one made in the translation cited above, n.1.

[7] The trilogy begins with the *Attainment of Happiness* as Part I, followed by the "two" philosophies in Parts II and III. But there is an unwritten "fourth" Part in which the addressee is asked to look for the common purpose and aim of the two philosophies. This "fourth" Part is hinted at again at the beginning of Part III, where a new set of four things is introduced (and recalled in the remarks that conclude the trilogy).

APPENDIX II: ARABIC GLOSSARY

Words listed are those which appear without a translation in any of the articles. Book titles are not included. The order is Latin alphabetical, ignoring the sign ʿ for Arabic ʿ*ayn*.

ʿ*ajam*, foreigners, contrasted with Arabs
ʿ*aql*, intellect
aṣl, pl.*uṣūl*, root; principle of a science
falsafa, philosophy
fanāʾ, passing away; obliteration of normal consciousness through absorption in thought of God
farʿ, pl.*furūʿ*, branch; detail of a science, contrasted with a principle
faylasūf, pl.*falāsifa*, philosopher
fiqh, Islamic law as a science
ḥadīth, conversation; oral and written Traditions of Islam
ḥakīm, wise man; scientist, philosopher
ḥikma, wisdom; science, philosophy
ʿ*ilm*, pl.ʿ*ulūm*, science, knowledge
ʿ*irfānī*, gnostic
ishrāqī, illuminationist
istidlāl, proof by induction
kalām, Islamic theology
kitāb, book
mamlaka(t), kingdom, realm
mashshāʿī, Peripatetic
mawjūd, existent
naẓar, vision; theoretical study
risāla, treatise
tafsīr, commentary
ṭarīqa, (*tariqat*), way; Ṣūfī order
ʿ*ulūm*, see ʿ*ilm*
umma, nation; community of Islam
uṣūl, see *aṣl*
wujūd, existence